

My name is Andrew Rogers, I am 49 years old and live in Allison Park, PA. I have known Brian Bartels for 4 years. I first met Brian when he became friends with my youngest son Calvin. Calvin was 12 at the time. Calvin had just started a new school and was having trouble making friends. Brian was the first friend he made at the school. As a member of the LGBTQ community, Calvin found some kids were unaccepting of him. Brian fully accepted Calvin and became an important friend in Calvin's life. Brian is a few years older than Calvin, so Brian would sometimes drive Calvin home from school and take him to local concerts. Calvin greatly admired Brian and told me recently about the positive impact Brian has had on his life.

Calvin's friendship with Brian led to a friendship between my oldest son Leo and Brian. Leo is a drummer and was hoping to play with a band. Leo did not know anyone in a band, so he wasn't making much progress. Once Leo became friends with Brian, that changed. Music is a big part of Brian's life, so he had multiple projects/bands. Before long, Leo was playing drums with Brian. It was a dream come true for Leo and Brian helped make it happen. Brian introduced to Leo to other members of the music community, broadening Leo's circle of friends. Shortly before becoming friends with Brian, Leo's best friend had died. Leo was sad and depressed. Brian's positivity, creative energy, and friendship help Leo through that difficult time.

During the period of time that Leo and Brian played in bands together, the bands would often practice at my house. For about a year and a half, Brian was at my house at least once per week. I was struck by his kindness, creativity, and passion. The band members were treated as an extension of his family.

One incident that stands out in my mind occurred at the music venue Mr. Roboto in Garfield, PA. Leo's band was performing there. A number of teens and pre-teens from the neighborhood were coming into the venue. These kids were African-American. Most of the adults at the venue were white and from the suburbs. One adult expressed concern the kids were stealing merchandise, although there was no evidence of anything missing. Since the kids had not paid admission, the white adults were uncomfortable and discussed calling the police. Brian intervened, volunteering to pay their admission, and bringing them into the area where the band was performing. Some of the older kids asked how they could perform at the venue someday. Brian explained the process to them. Initially, the situation was tense, but Brian stepped into it and calmed things down.

I have not seen Brian much of the last year, but I am grateful for the time that he spent with my kids. He had a significant positive impact on their lives.

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